DEATH AND BURIAL

The following is a description of funeral customs and rites observed at Nibutani. In other parts there are local differences, but so far as I can learn they are slight.

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Funeral Food

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With the exception of dried fish (*sat chep*)[1] which is specially requisite, and is often kept for funerals, the food eaten at them is much the same as for the feast which the ancestral spirits are believed to share. Now, however, some Ainu offer Japanese cakes, and fruit, and even put some in the coffin. The placing of food in the grave was not an Ainu custom. It is now usual for guests to bring food and a little money, and this mostly goes in the purchase of Japanese spirits (*shochu*). Formerly water only was the rule at funerals, and it was only on rare occasions such as the death of a village chief that a small quantity of sacred beer was brewed for the 'parting glass'. The women bring millet if they have it, *piyapa* for porridge and *munchiro*[2] for cakes (*shto*); this is brought unground and ground at the house of death. When an Ainu dies young or in middle age the milling goes on in silence, but when an elder or old woman dies it is thought that to sing an *upopo* cheers the departing spirit. The *upopo* of grinding is somewhat different from those sung in round dances, which are not danced at funerals.

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As soon as life is extinct food is prepared, for the deceased has eaten little during his illness and is therefore thought to be in need of sustenance. This is afforded by the essence or *ramat* of the food. Food is therefore offered to Kamui Fuchi, who sends its *ramat* to the Ancestral Host by a messenger (*shongo*). In some places the bowl of food (*pakekai*) is placed at the head of the corpse[3] with a single chopstick set up in the middle.

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The near relatives, sitting on each side of the corpse, which is laid to the north of the hearth with its head to the east, eat food from two trays, each of which bears four bowls. They eat with their fingers; guests formerly did the same, but now chopsticks are

[1] *Sat-chep* means literally dried fish, but is applied only to dried salmon of special quality made by a prescribed procedure. In the past its most important use was as an offering to the bear cub and for the feast in the bear cult.—H.W.

[2] *Panicum crusgalli* and *Setaria Italica* (Chiri, *Classificatory Dictionary of the Ainu Language*, Vol. 1, pp. 228 and 230).—H.W.

[3] It is said that at the present day a wife often drinks a cup of water placed by her deceased husband's head, and that a man will do the same for his deceased wife.—N.G.M.

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